A Fifth Way of Knowing- Memory

The traditional Theory of Knowledge( TOK) diagram deduces that there are only four means to gains knowledge- emotion, language, reason and sense perception. But, if one is not able to retain any of this knowledge, would any of it be worth knowing? This is where memory comes into play, making it a potential new Way of Knowing (WOK). My understanding of memory is that is when you are able to experience the world around us ( both physical and ideological), store that experience, and then retrieve it later as a memory. So really, the preexisting WOKs are meaning to gain knowledge that can be a potential memory( assuming we do not forget it).

Based on this idea of using memory to retain knowledge, therefore means that if one is unable to remember something, that means it did not happen, or did not exist, right? The benefit of using memory is that our first hand experiences should be more valid. But when our memories fail, that is when there is issues. The knowledge issue here is , To what extent can memory verify reality/what has occurred?

Before I further explore the perspectives related to this knowledge issue, it is important to understand the root from the following Real-Life Situation. In absurdist play “ The Bald Soprano” written by Eugene Ionesco, the characters Mr. and Mrs. Martin arrive at a dinner party together, and eat dinner together without realizing they are each other’s spouse. Because they do not recognize each other, through process of elimination that they live in the same house, went on the same holiday and and have the same child that they logically must be husband and wife. So that raises the question- if they had not have evidence of their marriage (failure of their memory) would that mean they are not husband and wife?

Before exploring a these knowledge issues related to different Areas of Knowing( History and the Human Sciences), it is import to first see how and why memory can effect each one. With out history, it would be much harder to have an understanding of the present and how we got to were we currently are. Although History does not relly on memory( but rather sources and supporting evidence), the concept of retrieving past information is much the same as using our memory. Of this, because History is not 100% verifiable due to the lack of witnesses etc, this also leads to counter arguments as to why memory is not necessary to gain and store knowledge. The Area of Knowledge (AOK), History, is related with the knowledge issues based from this real-life situation. In History, because we have not lived in the past, we have to use evidence, and difference sources (primary and secondary), in order to figure out what happened. So linking the reali-life situation and History, it can be said that if there is no evidence of historical events, then to the modern world, it is as if it never existed or happened.

But using out memory can have posivite impacts and verifying the truth in what we remember.. As an individual using our own memory may be comparable to our own “primary source”. Just as primary sources are seen as more thruthful( although bias), the same way be said for memory. Because memories are assumed be experiences by the individual, it is there for assumed that is really happen( instead of gain knowledge through someone else). On an individual basis, our own memories may be considered more truth than someone else’s memory because each person’s experience may be different from each other.

On the other hand, even with evidence of the past,there is still no way to verify the facts for certain. This is why the conjunction of both evidence and memory of an event make it the most reliable. This is because the evidence supports what every memory that is assumingly firsthand. So when it comes to memory, History suggests that we do not need memory in order to confirm. So looking at the real-life situation from a History point of view, memory is ( to an extent) not needed in order to verify the truth. In the Real-life situation, the only way both Mr. and Mrs.Martin knew they were married was but supporting evidence.

But if this is true, then that means that knowledge that is thought to be true can be false. At the end of the scene when the Martins deduce they are marriage, the housekeeper explaims they they both are not who they think they are- therefore rebutting what was just established. Now the issue arises is how the number of people may alter the validty of what may be true. So, if a large group of people say something is true, then this might make the point seem more valid than if less people agree with the statement. This is the reason why memory may serve useful for individuals to verify their own knowledge. When someone is thinking of a memory, it is assumed that they themselves have experienced that memory, first hand. This is Knowledge by acquaintance, an idea coined by Bertrand Russell, which is anything we know from personal experience.

Human Sciences on the other hand, is looking at peoples behaviors in order to gain knowledge. In psycology, there is growing research in mental illnesses. In terms of memory, when one is unable to remember something corrects, or perhaps their minds invent an idea( false memory/made-up), how can one be certain of the true?From a Human Science point of view( pycology), there is however cases when we may not be able to use our memory to obtain knowledge and when the majority( society) may dictate what is true knowledge compared to the individual. But then this raises the ethical issue of saying how is one person able to say that an other person’s reality is false.

Leading on from this point, this bring lead on to the next knowledge issue, How can the accuracy/truthfulness of our memory help us obtain knowledge? So even if we are using our memory to verify that something is true, now the problem is sorting how much of it we can rely on. On the opposite spectrum of having “good memory” is forgetfulness. My understanding of this is when one is unable to retrieve information that we have stored. We can say forgetting something is failure to retrieve information because when you experience something of relative important, one would imagen that this is what would be remembers. So on an individual basis, ones span of knowledge may be subjective to the next person because what someone thinks is important, might be remembers compared to the other who finds it unimportant. In history, primary, secondary and tertiary sources are use.

In conclusion, the knowledge issues that have been explored through different AOKs, demonstrate the relevance of using memory as a means to obtain knowledge. Although History suggests that memory is not needed in order to assume the truth, have actually memories of an experience in conjunction with supporting evidence verify obtained information much better. From the Human Science/Physcology point of view, when our own memories fails, it is typically that when more people agree on something, it appears to be more true. But from an individual stand point, what each person think is the truth is subjective, as each person has had experiences( therefore, different memories) throughout their lives.